

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted today to reauthorize and expand critical Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) support programs which have helped small airports across Upstate New York upgrade infrastructure and safety operations, including \$15.8 billion for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) which funds the Military Airport Program (MAP) that has provided over \$20 million in federal grants to the Griffiss Airfield in Rome since 2004.

“Local airports serve as critical points of growth and economic development throughout our region,” **said Arcuri, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee which is responsible for FAA reauthorization**. “This bill includes funding for key programs that have enabled the Griffiss Park in Rome to become a site of increasing economic potential, as well as safety and operations upgrades for Oneonta and Tompkins Regional airports. The funds in this bill will ensure local airports can update facilities, improve runways, and enhance safety measures to continue to provide quality service to our region. By investing in local airports we are investing in the local economy, expanding access to our pristine natural resources and top-notch businesses.”

Today, the House passed the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2881). The bill provides historic funding levels for the FAA’s capital programs between FY 2008 and FY 2011. It includes \$15.8 billion for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), \$37 billion for FAA Operations, and significant increases in AIP funding for smaller airports.

H.R. 2881 increases authorized funding for Essential Air Service each year from \$127 million to \$133 million and authorizes \$35 million annually for the Small Community Air Services Development program. Under the bill, the Transportation Department can take steps to improve air service quality and stability and increase the airlines providing service to smaller communities, including providing financial incentives.

During debate of H.R. 2881, Arcuri spoke in support of increasing the ability of low cost carriers to add flights from Washington, DC to Upstate New York – decreasing costs to Upstate travelers as well as expanding air access to Upstate businesses. Arcuri asked House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) to work during conference negotiations with the Senate to increase flights from National Airport by 2 roundtrips per hour to increase competition and decrease fares.

Last month, Arcuri announced that the FAA awarded \$2.86 million to Oneida County for continued redevelopment efforts at the Griffiss Airfield in Rome. This funding came in two installments during this fourth round of funding for Griffiss through the Military Airport Program (MAP) – bringing the total federal investment to over \$20 million in MAP funding since 2004. Arcuri also announced a total of \$1,285,779 for safety enhancements for the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport from the FAA, as well as \$114,950 for safety enhancements at the Oneonta Municipal Airport.

### The FAA Reauthorization Act:

- Includes \$13 billion to accelerate the implementation of the Next Generation Air Transportation System, enabling FAA to repair and replace existing facilities and equipment, and for implementing high-priority safety-related systems.
- Increases the number of aviation safety inspectors by more than one-third, and strengthened efforts to reduce runway incursions.
- Requires detailed plans for the Next Generation Air Transportation System, and authorizes GAO and Inspector General audits and reports to reduce cost overruns and delays in the air traffic control modernization program.

The bill also contains consumer protections in the Passenger Bill of Rights, requiring airlines and airports to develop plans to take care of passengers involved in long flight and tarmac delays, including plans for deplaning.

“This summer we heard all too often about horrendous delays and unacceptable treatment of passengers on flights around the country,” **said Arcuri**. “This bill takes the necessary first step to make sure airlines are proactively addressing increased delays and have contingency plans to help passengers – most importantly by allowing them off the plane – in the case of extensive holdovers.”

The first half of 2007 was the worst in history for airline delays: through July more than one-quarter of flights were delayed, and over 6 percent of flights arrived more than 1 hour late. Airline traffic is expected to increase, with a tripling of passengers, operations, and cargo by 2025.

During debate on H.R. 2881 Arcuri engaged in a colloquy with Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) regarding expanding air service from Washington, DC to Upstate New York. His remarks are attached below.

**U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)**

**In the House of Representatives**

**Colloquy with Chairman Oberstar Regarding Increased Access to DCA**

**Debate on H.R. 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007**

September 20, 2007

CHAIRMAN OBERSTAR: I rise to enter into a colloquy with my colleague and member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Mr. Arcuri.

MR. ARCURI: I thank the Chairman for allowing me the opportunity to discuss a vital economic development issue for Upstate New York -- increased access to Washington's National Airport.

Mr. Chairman, first thank you for your leadership on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to ensure the FAA is up to the task of keeping our growing aviation system safe and secure for the nearly 1 billion passengers who utilize air transportation services.

As you know, this past February, the GAO reported that the very unique airport which is closest to our nation's capital, and this Capitol building, National Airport, is underutilized. In fact, the GAO reported that National Airport is the least congested airport of the top 30 in the nation. This is not only because 20 percent of the airport remains virtually unused since September 11, 2001, with the security restrictions on general aviation, but because uniquely, Congress limits access to National Airport through a system of landing and takeoff slots.

Residents of my Upstate New York district want to continue visiting our nation's capital for business or pleasure at a reasonable airfare. However, because a very few airlines control the vast majority of the landing and takeoff slots at National, access is artificially limited. As is always the case in markets that are artificially constrained it causes fares to be high, artificially

higher than they would be with added competition and services are reduced. Fares from Syracuse to National Airport can be as much as \$400 each way – this is simply unfair. We all have seen the profound impact of new entry by low fare airlines. This has allowed more people fly at greatly reduced fares.

The GAO reported that National Airport could safely, and without adding to congestion, accept at least 2 more roundtrips per hour over the 15 regulated hours of the day – or 30 new daily roundtrips. With our skies more crowded than ever and our constituents more eager to travel than ever, we should not place artificial constraints on National Airport but rather we should permit the airport to operate as GAO states in its report it can – with 2 added roundtrips per hour.

Mr. Chairman, like all of my colleagues, I appreciate your strong leadership and guidance on aviation issues and your genuine concern for regional interests. I therefore respectfully request that you strongly consider adopting the findings of the GAO's conclusive report and increase flying at National Airport by a very modest 2 roundtrips per hour so that new competition can be added and fares can decrease.

CHARIMAN OBERSTAR: I thank my friend from New York for his comments and dedication to improving the economic climate in Upstate New York. I assure my colleague that Chairman Costello and I will consider his comments during our Conference discussions.

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